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The socialists' program

Manchester

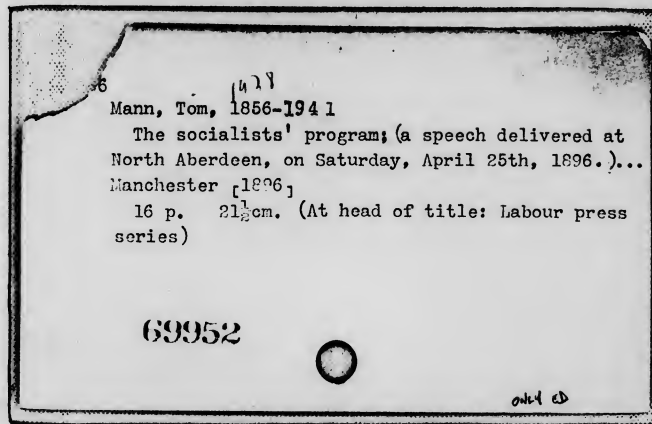
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LABOUR PRESS SERIES.

THE

SOCIALISTS' PROGRAM.

BY

TOM MANN.

[A SPEECH DELIVERED AT NORTH ABERDEEN, ON
SATURDAY, APRIL 25th, 1896.]

And the tale shall be told of a country,
A land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England
In the days that are to be.

There more than one in a thousand,
In the days that are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow,
Some joy in the ancient home.

—Wm. Morris.

MANCHESTER:

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Nov. 23, 1916. 03 03

The Socialists' Program.

[A Speech delivered at North Aberdeen, on Saturday, April 25, 1896.]

FRIENDS,—You are probably aware that I am here on the express invitation of a number of electors of North Aberdeen. I am not here to ask anyone to kindly invite me. I would be ashamed of any such behaviour, and hope I ever shall be ashamed of anything that savours of such behaviour. Having accepted the invitation which was duly forwarded, I am glad to know that I am here as the first of the candidates to address an open meeting of the electors of North Aberdeen; to state my principles and my policy fearlessly, fully, and frankly, not caring in the least whether you are pleased with it or whether you are displeased with it.

I have certain definite views which in past years I have advocated as effectively as I have known how. These views will be advocated by me during this campaign, and whether they are liked or lumped, they won't be modified to please the electorate. I shall ask you to remember in the first instance that we are citizens of a country that stands, in many senses, pre-eminent amongst the civilised nations of the world, and I am not insensible to the importance of our country industrially and commercially, neither am I insensible to the voice that our country is capable of exercising the influence she possesses and the commanding position she generally obtains and upholds in the Councils of the nations. Whilst that is so, I wish to make it perfectly clear at the outset, that I am not one who is able to subscribe to the general policy, that because we have what is termed the British empire, which, in area, is very vast, whose citizens are practically one-sixth of the inhabitants of the globe, and because our country, in particular, is very wealthy indeed, when compared with most civilised nations—I am not prepared on that account to bow down and worship all that is, as though everything were as it ought to be. On the contrary, I come before you as a workman, and in my capacity as a workman, with the responsibilities of a workman's life, having been brought into contact with the rough and tumble side of life, being myself what is termed a skilled artisan, and having been for many years a member of one of the recognised trade unions of our country, which indeed, covers not only our own country, but is international in a genuine sense, covering foreign countries

and the colonies; having been also brought into direct contact with the labourer's side of life as distinct from the skilled artisan's, knowing, therefore, what a workers position is by my own everyday experience, and having carefully studied the general industrial and social situation, I am not, as a result, prepared to worship institutions that exist as if they were even approximately perfect.

On the contrary, I am one of those who have declared my dissatisfaction with things as they are, who holds that the institutions that we have in our country require to be changed in a very important and serious sense, because I know, only too well—and many of you must know also—that there is a very large proportion of our fellow-men and women in the busy cities and towns, aye, and in villages, who are deprived of the means of an ordinary livelihood, not through any fault of their own, but because of an awkward industrial and social environment that they are powerless to control. Therefore are they in the slough of despond, bound down with the bonds of poverty, and as a consequence are suffering most acutely. As an ordinary citizen, an ordinary man of the world, I have recognised it to be my bounden duty during the past, and at this hour, to endeavour to understand what ought to be my individual relationship with other men and other women, not with one section of the community, but with the whole community. I have tried to understand how it comes about that one section of our country can, with very little effort on their part, obtain not only an abundance of that which is necessary for life and well-being, but much more than is sufficient for themselves and those dependent on them, whilst those working very hard and working relatively very long, can scarce get enough of the bare necessities of life.

In face of the appalling fact known to every student of our industrial and social position, that there are not merely thousands, or tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, but actually millions of our fellow citizens who cannot at any time obtain sufficient of the bare necessities of life—in face of such mental, physical, and moral degradation—I am not prepared to worship the grandeur, the so-called glory of the British Empire. No country can be looked upon as satisfactory that does not afford a proper livelihood for every decently-behaved citizen. Whilst I am not prepared to decry our own country as against other countries, I refuse to be associated with those who seem to find some satisfaction in declaring that a Britisher is a very superior person to any other countryman, and I refuse to subscribe to any such policy because in the aggregate we may truthfully be described as a rich and wealthy nation, that, therefore, all is comparatively well. I know that all is not well, but very far from well, indeed; and

therefore, I have been what many persons like to term “An Agitator,” and I am at this time AN AGITATOR, AND INTEND TO REMAIN ONE.

If the respectabilities of North Aberdeen are not pleased with the general behaviour of such an agitator, there will be no pleading on my part that you should try to. I only want to make a frank, full confession, being, as I have said, utterly indifferent as to what your judgment shall be after you have heard my statement. I do now interchange views with you by asking if you are aware of the standard of life that obtains throughout the length and breadth of our country. When I speak of our country, of course I am referring to the entire British Isles. Are you aware that 24s. per week represents the average wage received by the whole adult male workers of Britain, and that out of that there has to be paid in some districts no less than average of 9s. per week as rent for reasonable accommodation for an ordinary-sized family; and further, that when I describe that as the average—I am using official figures, quoting, indeed, from Robert Giffen, the statistician to the Board of Trade, who, in his evidence recently before the Royal Commission on Labour (of which I happened to be a member) made the statement that £60 a year represented the earning capacity of the ordinary adult male in Britain; now, I venture to declare that £60 per year is not sufficient to secure those means of life and well-being that we may at this time in reason expect to be able to obtain as respectably-behaved and industrious citizens.

PROGRAM AND POLICY.

I therefore ask you to recognise this, that the whole of my program and the whole of my policy will bear directly upon raising the standard of life for the entire working population of our nation. Holding, as I do, that Parliament should exist primarily for the purpose of contributing to the advancement of those who create the wealth of the nation, in order that there shall be an honest, and therefore equitable, apportionment of the wealth created amongst those who take part in creating it. The poverty, and as a consequence, the crime and misery, that exist are of so appalling a character that we have those who profess to have regard for their removal in almost every rank of life. It is perfectly true that there are such among politicians, that some statesmen can be mentioned, that philanthropists can be named outside the ranks of working men and women, and outside the ranks of those with whom I commonly associate, but whilst that is so, I am bound to ask you to recognise that good intention is not in itself sufficient to remove the serious evils we are burdened with. We must not only be possessed of good intentions, we must have the requisite knowledge

to understand the exact why and wherefore of our relatively degraded position, and also must we be able to understand what principle it is necessary to apply in order to rectify the evil. Now, without any disparagement of any individual, or any section of Parliamentarians, I am bound to express my conviction that the average man that seeks to get returned to Parliament is not generally characterised as a student of sociological conditions. The average man, who has sought to get returned to Parliament, and has generally succeeded, has rather been a man of the capitalist or landlord class—classes raised entirely on the shoulders of the real workers—whilst the workers themselves, the actual wealth producers of our nation, have hitherto, for the most part, been content to return to Parliament, and to other places, those very plutocrats and aristocrats who have been living at their expense, and who intend, and have always admitted that they intend to uphold, to maintain, to buttress up the existing orthodox institutions that shall admit in future of a plutocracy and aristocracy living at the expense of a democracy.

DEMOCRACY AND THE SOVEREIGN.

I believe I am correct in stating that throughout the world there is now a general awakening to a consciousness that there is something vitally wrong in the constitutions of our various civilised nations: that the caste or class system has hitherto been permitted to dominate over the mass of the people. Some of them are kind enough to declare that the people, unless they are controlled, unless they are guided, unless they are manœuvred, unless they are driven, cannot exist except as so many cattle. Such are the declarations in one form or another made by representative plutocrats and autocrats. And in one country we find a despotic Czar, without any semblance of representative government, who can, at his own sweet will, decree that certain citizens shall be banished for ever from their country, and the order is peremptorily carried out; who can decree that because a man dares to exercise his manhood and express dissatisfaction with the conditions that obtain, that that is to be a sufficient crime to warrant his expulsion from his fatherland, and to carry him to a penal settlement. In another country, we have a despotic Kaiser, who, although there is something in the nature of a representative government, has at present a sufficient backing on the part of the plutocracy that he can and does wield a power and an influence that is distasteful and nauseating to the nature of a really developed man or woman. In another country—our nearest neighbour—we have what purports to be a republican government. It is in a funny position, I am bound to admit, just now, but they are very rarely in other than a funny position. Over this

people there is neither Czar nor Kaiser, nor Empress Queen. Nevertheless there is a dominating plutocracy exercising control over the mass of the people, and insisting on a plutocratic domination continuously.

In our own country we have a limited monarchy—a monarch that is respected, and perhaps deservedly so, for various reasons. But all the same I am bound to express my conviction that in proportion as men become men and women become women they will require neither Czar, Kaiser, nor Empress Queen. I am identified with those who hold that an intelligent community should be their own government, if they require a government at all; that to entrust sovereign power, even with various limitations, indicates the relative childhood of a nation, and if it should be the case—as I venture to suggest it is—that the British nation are developing mentally, why, then, the time is approaching when, with much respect—and with much grace, doubtless—we shall be able to dispense with sovereigns altogether. But let none suppose that I place very much value upon that. I have purposely referred to it for the sake of frankly indicating the trend of opinion which I am favouring; but at the same time I know full well that a mere Republican Government, as ordinarily understood, as witnessed in any civilised country that can be named to-day, would do us no good whatever—because none of them have recognised where the real burden comes in.

WHY POVERTY EXISTS.

It is for me, therefore, to ask you to please recognise this, that the first essential of civilised life, perhaps also of savage life, are food, clothing, shelter, and some amount of recreation. We have not them in sufficient abundance. Why have we them not? Does not the productive capacity of our people in Britain admit of a much higher standard than that which obtains? The answer is: Yea, for an absolute certainty. If it does, then by what means can we make the requisite changes that shall drive poverty from the land, and establish foundations of peace and plenty? I argue that our prime use for parliament should be to enable the democracy to obtain such control of its own industrial and social destiny, as shall enable them to become triumphant over those conditions.

If it be true, as I allege, that nature has been sufficiently kind as to supply the children of men with all that is essential to real life and wellbeing; and if it be also true, that our own nation amongst others, has developed the requisite mental capacity to know how to control the raw material of nature, so that with a wise expenditure of power we possess, with comparative ease, we can produce enough and to spare for everybody, why, then, it becomes our bounden duty to endeavour to

understand how it has come about that we have not as yet applied that power wisely, and why we should still require workhouses, jails, street-corner loafers, beggars by the hundred thousand, and ne'er-do-wells in increasing shoals. You require the ne'er-do-wells on the one side, with the jail birds and the slum dwellers, because on the other side you tolerate the system, acquiesce in the system, and have approved of the system that encourages and upholds and maintains, and affords scope and opportunities for company promoters and all that pertains thereto, who live by fleecing, by scheming, by dodging, by trickery, by rascality, and by developing all the qualities that enable them to prosper. And it has generally been that the more successful the exploiter, the greater readiness has been exhibited on the part of the electorate to return such a one (because he has been successful, forsooth!) to the Legislative Assembly in order that there he can continue to exercise a dominant influence, socially, industrially, and politically. But apparently the eyes of a portion of the electorate are being opened, and now there is less satisfaction in fighting for a man simply because he occupies an important position in the social scale; there is less satisfaction now in returning anyone unless they have previously been subjected, as it were, to a cross-examination, and their desires understood and their principles examined and approved of. I do not for one moment pretend that the electorate of Great Britain is remarkably wise; but I think we are warranted in saying that we are getting a little wiser than we were; and if anyone should be disposed to apply this and say, "Well, we shall show our wisdom by rejecting you," I shall still acquiesce with the greatest grace and thankfulness. All the same, I ask you now, is it not the case that you and I as citizens of this country, responsible like other citizens for families, being desirous of discharging our duties in a becoming and honourable fashion, unwilling to live at other peoples expense, but not being specially desirous that other able-bodied people should live at our expense—is it not admissible or desirable that we should seek now to apply very definite principles for the rectification of these defects? Are there any here whose social condition is such, or may have been such, that they have never hungered for a meal, who have never known, except by hearsay, what it is to be in want, and who sometimes wonder whether there are any unemployed apart from those who are really indifferent to work? If there are, then I ask you to please put yourself to the trouble to understand the facts of the case, and if you are willing to go, even to the governmental sources—which are not always distinctly favourable to those who are unemployed—and you will find even from such a report as that issued monthly, "The Labour Gazette," through

the agency of the Labour Department of the Board of Trade, that the proportion of unemployed, as registered by the various unions, is positively appalling compared with what you have probably thought has been the case. I need not trouble to dwell upon this, but I will quote Carlyle: "Do you notice the horses in the street, and see how relatively well-fed and sleek-coated they are, and are you disposed to urge that it is impossible for British citizens to be equally well fed with British horses?" Such was Carlyle's question, such is mine; and I declare to you, and you know it to be true, that there are hundreds of thousands of British men, women and children whose actual condition is much inferior to the ordinary cart-horse. Carlyle said: "Do you ask whether it is impossible to obtain as good conditions for British men and women? If so, then clear out of the way and make room for better men and women." I reiterate Carlyle's statement, and declare that those with whom I am associated—and I hope they will not consider it egotistical—have vowed as men and women may be permitted to vow, and, like Carlyle declare, that for ourselves and our children who are following us, we will spend ourselves in the endeavour to secure to the men, women, and children of our country, at least as good conditions as we now give to the ordinary cart-horse.

THE WAY TO PEACE AND PLENTY

The cautious will be disposed to say: "Of course we can endorse so elementary a statement, but we are not all sure where you would lead if you had the chance." Then I will tell you by quoting one simple sentence from the autobiography of John Stuart Mill, who ought to be known, and, I presume, is pretty well-known in this district. Speaking, I believe, for himself and his wife, he said: "The social problem of the future we consider to be how to secure the greatest individual liberty of action, with the common ownership of the raw material of the globe, and the equal participation by all in the benefits of combined labour." That is the basis upon which I am here to-night. That is the economic basis upon which I am running this election campaign; and if any of you—press included—desire to argue against my Collectivist principles, do not forget that, at the same time, you must argue down the Collectivist principles, clearly expressed, of John Stuart Mill. If you will say that John Stuart Mill was not identified with our particular school of thought, I am prepared to admit the fact, seeing that John Stuart Mill died some years before it was possible for him to be closely identified with it. But if anyone is prepared to fairly face the question, and try to understand the attitude taken up by Mill in his early years, his middle life, and towards the close of his life, then I think that you will

be disposed to declare, that in quoting this sentence, I am quoting Mill's state of mind when he wrote that autobiography, and when doubtless he was in the fullest possession of a developed intellect. And what he saw was forthcoming has come. The social problem he spoke of as being likely to arise in the future, we are living right in the front of; we are in that particular stage when we must face the social problem. I am therefore proposing to deal with the methods whereby we will attack this social problem and try to solve it. The desire is to place within the reach of every properly behaved citizen all that is essential to real life and well-being, therefore we must not have excessive work, and we ought to have enough work.

THE EIGHT HOURS QUESTION!

To-day the unemployed do not get enough, and the over-worked, of course, get too much, and that lands us right off into the very simple statement and contention, that surely it is desirable that there should be an adjustment with regard to the working hours of men and women of our country. The very just and simplest statement that can be made is that, as we find there are men working no less than 16 hours out of 24, and that other men who would be equally capable of work, and who would be glad to have the opportunity of working, are without work, and are suffering in consequence, surely good sense says let us ease up on the one side, and give a little work to the other side. Therefore, it is that the various Trade Unions of our country, as well as other labour sections, have for years been discussing the desirability until they have now reached the position that they say it is absolutely necessary that there should be regulation of working hours, and they have declared in favour of an eight hours working day as being one of the simplest and most practicable steps that can be taken to rectify some of the industrial and social evils of our time. If anybody should be disposed to say that this cannot cure the unemployed problem, I can accompany you in that, but I say it could do a good deal towards rectifying the evils we are now deploring. And it is right and proper and becoming from an economic, industrial, and from a social standpoint, that we should so regulate the working hours. In the first instance, surely it is desirable that not more than eight hours should be spent in obtaining a sufficiency of the bread that perisheth, if we can produce enough in that time. Surely, it is desirable in the interests of men and women who are already actually at work, and even more desirable is it for those men and women who have not the chance to work at all, and who should be afforded an opportunity by those who are working excessively! I know, of course, that it has been said—and probably with a considerable amount of truth—that in certain departments of

industry men can soon learn to produce as much in eight hours as they were formerly producing in nine and ten, and good luck to them for being able to do so. But there are many departments of industry where that would be impossible for a very considerable time, and all that there is to be said is that, as soon as we reach a period when as much work can be done in eight hours as can be done in nine or ten, then let us come down to seven, or even six. And if it should appear rather stupid to any of you, then I ask, how do you propose to distribute the advantages of our nation's material progress? If it be true that year by year we are gaining a little over nature, and are capable of producing in five hours, and at a little later stage in four hours, that we formerly produced in six; how would you distribute, but by easing the daily burden all round, and generally equalising the reward of labour? Surely, of all measures, the one that ought to commend itself to the average man and the average woman is that for the regulation of working hours. I am, therefore, in favour of an eight hours' working day for the whole of the trades and industries of our nation. And if any should be disposed to ask: "Would I refuse to accept any measure that was not really national," I say "No, I would not refuse." If for instance, as happens to be the case, the miners made a special effort, as they have done, to demand an eight hours' day, and having, as I consider they have very special claims for attention in this direction without waiting for the general volume of the nation. If I were in the House I should continue, as I have done out of it, to advocate the reasonableness, wisdom, and the good sense on the part of the miners in insisting on the application of eight hours as the maximum working day in their industry, and if a little later other industries should be disposed to make advances, out of proportion to the general body, I should, of course, be prepared to back up their demands, and to do all in my power to see that it was applied to them at the earliest possible moment; but I declare fearlessly and frankly in favour of a maximum eight hours working day for all.

TREATMENT FOR PHYSICAL WRECKS.

That would do something towards solving the unemployed problems, but it could not really solve it. I know that something else would be necessary, and I know there are many classed as unemployed who are at the present hour physically unfit for labour for various reasons. They have been out of work too long a time, they have had insufficient food, and live in unhealthy conditions generally, and they cannot compete in accordance with the demands of the competitive system, nor are they likely ever to be able to, unless some special steps are taken, I therefore declare in favour of the

State, that is the executive of the State, in conjunction with the various local governing bodies, taking such action as shall afford a reasonable outlet for the energy possessed by persons like unto whom I am referring. By this I mean that just as I, the father of a family, am bound to have regard for every child for which I am responsible, whether the child be capable or not, as compared with some others, is not the child's concern, it is my concern, and so with regard to the State. If we believe in Constitutional Government, if we believe in the community's Executive, if we are disposed to use it in the interest of the democracy, why, then, who will say it is not the duty of such an Executive to have regard for those who have been the victims of an awkward environment? Surely that is quite fair as a matter of common humanity. I ask that it should be recognised that those who have been victimised, from whatever cause, should have special attention paid to them, and I believe it would become quite an easy matter for the Executive Government along with the local administrative bodies, to obtain control of the land in the right districts, and place those persons either upon it, or in industrial undertakings in connection with such a colony, and thus make it possible for them first to receive the requisite training, and then to become actual producers of what they require to consume, and probably, at no distant date, of a margin over and above that. And if there are any disposed to say, "Ah, but it would be a tax upon the community," remember that, from the fact that they are living, they are a tax upon the community now. There is no jail-bird or street-corner loafer not living at the community's expense, and what I am proposing is simply a scientific method of providing for their requirements, and doing it in a becoming and dignified way that shall not disgrace our common humanity.

PRODUCTION IN GREAT BRITAIN.

In conjunction with this, I would ask you to recognise that the British nation is not producing a large proportion of food stuffs it consumes, and it is held by many, and by many whose opinions I think are worth noting, that it is desirable, aye, and becoming very necessary, that we should produce in Britain a larger proportion of food stuffs than we now do. The fact is we produce only one-third of the food stuffs we require to consume. It is not because the land will not yield, it is not because the requisite good sense does not exist, but it is because there has been a general rush to produce wealth by the capitalistic section in the easiest possible fashion, irrespective of the well-being of the community.

Without trying to put the blame on any particular shoulder, I simply ask that it be recognised that the day is rapidly approaching when British commercial supremacy

will be seriously questioned and threatened. Nay, not approaching; it has approached, it is right here—I would remind you that the Right Hon. John Morley quite recently referred to the fact—I think on the occasion of his last speech at Newcastle-on-Tyne, that every year brought us intensified competition from every Continental country, and that now we were to be confronted with the competition of Eastern nations. That means, of course, that Japan and China and India are all entering to cater for the world's markets, and therefore British supremacy, industrially speaking, is very seriously questioned. What the orthodox man has propounded is that the British worker shall buckle to, and by one means or another overcome the foreigner, and beat him and drive him to destruction. I tell you I despise and hate such a doctrine. Tell me that the only way for my salvation is, as it were, to drive somebody else to starvation and desperation, and I refuse to have salvation on those terms. I for one do not regret that the Continental nations are learning to produce commodities which were formerly produced by Britain, but, of course, that carries with it the absolute necessity of understanding in what direction we can develop our energy, so as to balance the requisite production of food-stuffs with the production of manufactured commodities. Therefore, I anticipate that Britain must learn to produce more food-stuffs than she has done, because other countries will produce more manufactured commodities than they have done. And there is no earthly reason worth consideration why they should not do so, as, of course, there is no real, sound reason why we should not be more a food-producer and perhaps a little less a producer of coal and iron and other hardware. I ask you, therefore, if you endorse the ordinary commercial principle that what you have endorsed as part of this principle is increased and intensified competition with every European nation, with America, and now with the Japs and the Chinamen. If you can look forward to that, I cannot, and I do not want the support of those who can. I tell you plainly that I would be ashamed to subscribe to a policy that tells me I can only get food for myself and family, and other men like me, by fighting down and driving to despair other men equally courageous, equally lovable, and equally unobjectionable in every way. I therefore call for such attention being given to agriculture as shall enable us scientifically to divert the surplus energy from industrial pursuits to food-producing channels. This will bear rigid investigation, it will bear the investigation of scientific experts, and it will bear the investigation and receive the approval of the sound economists of the country.

CHILD LABOUR AND PENSIONS FOR ALL.

Now, a friend on my left shouted, "The women first." I

admire his gallantry. I ask that it should be recognised, that all who are in a relatively helpless position should receive prime attention, therefore, I call for scientific attention being given to children. Their labour does not obtain in Aberdeen to the extent that it does in some other towns in Britain, but I believe it does obtain to a far greater extent than we would look upon with approval. Now, I know that the income of the ordinary parents are not sufficient to enable them to live in comfort, unless they get all that is possible through the agency indicated. But remember, I have subscribed, and do now subscribe, and ask you to try and do the same, to that definite kind of organisation that lands you into the Trades Union movement, to fight for and obtain—as men responsible for your families—a sufficient income to enable you to behave with requisite dignity, so that you can maintain your home without having to resort to the labour of mere infants. Therefore, I am opposed to infants going to work at twelve years of age even, and I should be glad to see, and should work for a raising of the age, at the earliest possible moment, to something considerably higher than that I have indicated, before children should be called upon to labour in the mills, the factories, or the workshops. Another important question that I am bound to work for, and that I think would commend itself to you, is adequate provision in the form of pensions for all industrial soldiers, for all genuine citizens who have laboured and have reached that period of life when assistance is absolutely required, because they are not in a fit condition to provide for themselves under the old conditions. Then they ought, as a matter of right, having worked in their day and contributed to the community's well-being, to receive from the community what is requisite for their adequate maintenance. Therefore, I am in favour of pensions for all, irrespective of the positions they occupy, and always making, of course, for that position when there shall be equality of opportunity for all, and when we shall approximate to equal conditions. Remember, I include here the infirm and the sick as well as the elderly. Every infirm person, every sick person, irrespective of the causes, should be cared for by the community, in the interests of the community, as well as in the interest of the child.

NATIONALISATION.

With a view of bringing about that state of genuine co-operation, I look forward to, instead of this capitalistic system, we call for the nationalisation of the railways and waterways of our country. It is a sin and a shame that the railways should be primarily controlled in the interests of shareholders rather than in the interests of the industry of the country and of the travelling public. Ere

long I shall expect to see developed that volume of opinion that will call for the control of the railways and waterways of our country by the community's executive in the interests of all, affording every reasonable facility for the opening up of the country to agriculture and to industry generally. I call for the nationalisation of the mines and minerals of the country. The minerals are the gift of nature, and are not by moral right the property of anyone handful of the community. I am identified with those who would at the earliest possible moment undertake to control them and regulate their output through the agency of state regulation, and not leave it to the caprice of the individuals who to-day control them for their own selfish interests. We must declare that the surface land must be common property. Land was not made by man or woman. It is the gift of Nature to the common children of men, and it is not for you nor for me nor for anybody above us or below us to exercise a monopoly-power over it. That we should have tolerated it so far is not very complimentary either to our intelligence or to our courage. I know the day is some distance off when land nationalisation is likely to be successfully carried through the British House of Commons. I, therefore, expect to see changes made in the direction of common or collective ownership, by adding to the power of the local governing bodies. We have further South, Parish Councils, of a somewhat different character from yours. It is an administrative body, exercising functions other than those of the Parochial Board; but you, as well as we, have County Councils and District Councils, and we call, and I am now calling for the requisite power being invested in these bodies, so that through the agency of the State they may be enabled to obtain from the present owners, such land as the residents in the respective districts may be willing to cultivate collectively, paying rent (for rent will always have to be paid) to the recognised communal authority, and therefore securing to community all the advantages of the unearned increment which hitherto has gone to the mere landlord, who has done nothing whatever to produce it. In the seven points I have now enumerated, I have given

SEVEN DEFINITE PRACTICAL PROPOSALS.

If you should be disposed to say, "Oh, but the country is not equal to it yet." Why, what is Parliament for, and what are we for, and what are you for? To wait until somebody else can lead, and then you are to follow? I am not going to do that. I tell you in the plainest language that I will refuse to be a drag weight upon political opinion, and I refuse to be an observant of Mrs. Grundy, that I will not dare to speak the faith I have learned and understand, and

I will not subscribe, if I know it, to any spasmodic or erratic policy; and I hope to be able ever to retain sufficient mental vigor and love of genuine progress as to dare to step out of the ordinary orthodox rut and to say: "This is the way: Walk ye in it." If you cannot, I will, anyway, or perish in the attempt. If you are disposed to say: "Where is the money to come from to enable these changes to be made?" then I must remind you of certain facts—that the workers who produce the wealth of the nation do not receive more than one-half of that which they produce; that about one-fourth of the total community, as Chamberlain once said, and he himself is included—toil not, neither do they spin, yet are they arrayed in much magnificence at the expense of those who do. I ask you to recognise that, through the agency of a graduated income tax, we would gladly rectify the anomalies that to-day exist, and provide adequately for all the changes I have suggested. If any of you are disposed to say: "Is it idealism, after all?" I am not prepared to go back on my idealism, and I will not give one inch to any man amongst you for definite, practical, detailed, solid work, calculated to build up a newer and better country than we have yet known. I ask you to understand that if you and I know each other more closely, I will refuse to be a nonentity. I will refuse to be kicked and cajoled, but I will always be willing and glad to be consulted and to consult you. I will try to understand exactly your particular requirements, as the North Division of Aberdeen, but I will never pretend that Aberdeen is heaven and everywhere else is hell. I am, and intend to remain, cosmopolitan, but it does not debar me, or in any way prevent me, from giving every reasonable attention to local requirements.

I am prepared for any kind of opposition. Fearing no one's power, courting no one's favour, I state my case as a workman, who, if returned, would have some satisfaction in trying to fight on the floor of the House of Commons as I have endeavoured to fight outside, for those principles of truth and justice and equity, as I understand them, hoping thereby to contribute to the day when poverty shall be banished and peace and plenty shall prevail, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks, when nation shall not lift itself up against nation, shall learn war no more, and when brotherhood and sisterhood shall really be an established fact, with all the blessings that follow in its train.

**END OF
TITLE**